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Feminism and Mysticism: An Analysis of the Experiences of Female Mystics in the Medieval Era

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Abstract

Mysticism is the experience of direct communion with the Ultimate Reality, which can be attained through subjective experiences. However, the social discrimination and specific challenges experienced by women mystics, as compared to their male counterparts, have played pivotal roles in shaping their spiritual journeys and mystical experiences in the medieval era. The mystical experiences of four well-known medieval female mystics like Dame Julian of Norwich, Lalleshwari, Meerabai, and St. Catherine of Siena, are examined in this research study. The investigation shows that because they were women and due to underlying societal expectations, each of the mystics encountered major hurdles. The teachings of Dame Julian of Norwich show a progressive approach to spirituality that questions conventional gender stereotypes and incorporates feminine aspects of divinity. Lalleshwari is shown as committing herself to self-realization as well as divine truth while living in a hierarchical culture by breaking away from accepted norms and living as a wandering ascetic. Even though she was under pressure from her family members as well as society at large, Meerabai's devotion for Krishna demonstrates devotion for spiritual rather than moral obligations. A passionate reformist within the Church, Saint Catherine experienced resistance not only from ecclesiastical authorities but also within her own family; a reflection of the difficulties faced by women during their pursuit or intellectual or spiritual lives. Additionally, the research study attempts to illustrate how these mystics' love and devotion to God was communicated in an exceptional way by often rejecting social conventions as well as breaking gender expectations. They not only negotiated but also overcame their spiritual practices and personal sacrifices, thus contributing to a larger and more inclusive spirituality. A comparison between Western and Indian mystics has been drawn to highlight the diverse

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experiences that they underwent to shape the history of various cultures and regions. The study endeavours to sum up the spiritual experiences of Catherine, Lalleshwari, Julian, and Meerabai, which are characterized by resourcefulness and perseverance. Their lasting contributions to religious thought and cultural history manifest in their legacies that challenge popular thinking and offer penetrating insights into the intersectionality's of faith, gender, and societal roles.

Keywords: Women, Mystics, God, Dame Julian of Norwich, Lalleshwari, Meerabai, St. Catherine of Sienna, Christian, Hindu, Devotion, Divinity, Social Discrimination.

INTRODUCTION

Mysticism is variously defined as the belief that direct knowledge of God, the spiritual truth, or the Ultimate Reality can be attained through subjective experiences (such as intuition or insight). It is further explained as the experience of mystical union or direct communion with the Ultimate Reality which is reported by mystics, or practitioners of mysticism. The term mystic is derived from the Greek noun mystes, which traditionally designated an initiation of a secret cult or mystery religion. In Classical Greece and during the Hellenistic Age [the period between the death of Alexander the Great (323 BC) and the conquest of Egypt by Rome (30 BC)], the rites and practices of the mystery religions were largely or wholly hidden from the world, but Christianity later disavowed secrecy, resulting in a transformation of the word mystes. Those who engaged in doctrinally sanctioned types of religious ecstasy were referred to as mystes, or mystics, in later Christian terminology.

During the 13th century, the range of objects of contemplation was increased to include the Passion of Christ, visions of saints, and tours of heaven and hell. Furthermore, in the 17th and 18th centuries, the enthusiasms of quaking, shaking, and other infusions of the Holy Spirit were also referred to as mystical. In the mid-19th century, the competition between the perspectives of theology and science resulted in a compromise, in which most varieties of what had traditionally been called "mysticism" were dismissed as mere psychological phenomena and only one variety, which aimed at union with the Absolute, the Infinite, or God was claimed to be genuinely mystical. Academic scholars ultimately abandoned the traditional understanding of mysticism in the 1970s

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and since then, certain scholars have expanded the definition of mysticism to include all religious uses of altered states of consciousness, while others have rejected it as a fiction.

A new centre of power emerged in the Church throughout the later Middle Ages: female mystics. This period was largely characterised by a growing influence of women's voices on spirituality in spite of the misogynistic belief that the female body was less divine than the male body and therefore less able to connect with God. Initially, the mediaeval clergy generally believed that there was a higher, mystical connection between a man and God and a lesser, bodily link between a woman and a man. However, compared to the Early Middle Ages, a brief review of mystical sources from the twelfth to the fifteenth centuries reveals an abundance of female mystical experiences and teachings. Whether it was realigning themselves with the physicality of Christ and viewing Him as mother, lover and bridegroom or reimagining female spirituality with an egalitarian perception of the Song of Songs, religious women found that their gender was not a hindrance in their experience of the Divine. The lives of women such as Catherine of Siena, Meerabai, Marguerite Porete, Julian of Norwich, Hildegard of Bingen, and Joan of Arc are just some examples of women who wrote of occurrences with God with the same conviction as their male counterparts. While exploring the vast literature surrounding this topic, it was observed that there was a dearth of female perspectives due to an exclusive focus on the male point of view. Historical research has provided literature dominated by the male perspective, resulting in the bypassing of the spiritual and social experiences of female mystics. To strengthen the feminist argument, the concept of Ecriture Feminine (coined by Hélène Cixous) has been adopted, which entails a uniquely feminine style of writing characterised by disruptions in the text. Unlike the cold, logical prose of their male counterparts, female mystics often utilised bodily and emotional language, which is often difficult to understand, attributed to the centuries of suppression of the female voice. Another research gap was in the comparison of female figures across Western and Indian cultures to find universal commonalities and differences. This study seeks to bridge the gap in understanding how diverse cultures produced similar ways of female rebellion through mysticism. Figures like Julian of Norwich used visions to reimagine divinity with feminine qualities and similar contributions have been investigated in this study.

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY: Female mystics in the medieval era encountered numerous socio-religious barriers and institutional discrimination. This study examines how stereotypical

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roles and gendered expectations influenced their concept of mysticism in comparison to their male counterparts. Modern society requires a historical blueprint for navigating societies, where traditional values and evolving gender roles frequently intertwine. By examining how these female mystics challenged biological essentialism, this study attempts to validate women's autonomy to enter professional sectors traditionally attributed to men.

A comparative cross-cultural analysis between Eastern and Indian mystics identifies how the intersectionality's of faith and gender influenced responses to social oppression within a rigid orthodox framework. Ultimately, the study illustrates that mysticism served as a powerful tool for social and spiritual reform in the medieval era, attempting to bridge the gap between historical struggle and modern spiritual and social awareness.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The academic discourse surrounding feminine mysticism highlights a profound intersection between spiritual realization and social defiance, as seen in the compilation of presentations from the National Seminar on Lal Ded. (Toshakhani, 2002). Scholars have presented Lal Ded as one of the greatest symbols of Kashmir's spiritual culture and explored her various poetry and personality. Her work addresses universal themes such as the oneness of all existence and the complexities of the human condition. Grounded in the insights of Shaivism regarding reality and consciousness, Lalleshwari's poetry, or Vaakhs, emphasizes a journey of profound self-realization and an intense yearning for Lord Shiva. (Jan & Sood, 2017). Lalleshwari's Vaakhs provide insights into her communion with the divine and shed light on her spiritual quest and life-changing experiences. Her quest for spiritual purity is reflected in the themes of unity, transcendence, and rejection of worldly attachments that propagate in her poetry. Lalleshwari's poetry is revered by Kashmiris and has been passed down from generation to generation, orally. (Deswal, 2020). Her poems illuminate the path for spiritual growth for individuals, as well as groups due the struggles that civilizations have to deal with, including ongoing conflict, which throws light once again on the idea that genuine advancement necessitates paying attention to the insights of poets and mystics rather than just the speeches of political leaders. (Kour, 2021). With a focus on her innovative use of this poetic form to question social norms and put forth mystical insights, Kour (2024) stated that the poems encourage a broader view of the self and divinity, while also criticizing the social oppression and superstitions of her time. By breaking the bonds of rigid societal rules to live as a

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wandering mystic, Lalleshwari connected her philosophy with a Kashmiri identity that transcended religion and caste. Her ability to connect with contemporary readers through her visionary ideas of mysticism, as well as her dedication to social and spiritual reform are what gave her Vaakhs their enduring appeal.

Similarly, the life and poetry of Meerabai offer a thorough analysis of how personal devotion can challenge established social and familial norms. As a central figure of the Bhakti movement, Meerabai's padas — divided into themes of salutation, love for Krishna, material discontent, and separation — showcase a deep, intimate love where human and divine boundaries become blurred and almost indistinguishable. (Pandey & Norman, 1965). Her verses maintain a sincere and compassionate expression of devotion, in spite of their occasional repetition on certain topics. This illustrates the fact that although repetitive at times, Meerabai's emotional richness and simplicity highlight her steadfast devotion to her divine love and spiritual connection with Krishna. Research by Kishwar et al. (1992), highlighting her "path from poison to nectar", emphasizes the gender-specific challenges she faced compared to her male counterparts, like Kabir Das. Meerabai is often viewed as an idol for subjugated classes, particularly women, who stood against prevailing social evils through her daasyabhav (service to God). Her poetic power also opens a scope for ecological analysis, identifying her as a pioneer in reflecting upon the creative unity of humanity, nature, and God. (Singh, 2011). As a poetess of divinity, she was the first to identify diversity and disharmony between men and nature. However, according to Kishwar et al., her legacy remains paradoxical; while she received immense admiration for her courage and defiance, her unique spiritual path did not immediately lead to increased autonomy for other women of her time, highlighting the persistent restrictions placed on female roles.

The disparity in religious footing based on gender is further examined through the lives of medieval Christian mystics like Catherine of Siena. According to Thomas (2018) and Vost (2021), Catherine of Siena utilized her theological knowledge and mystical visions—categorized into treatises on divine providence, discretion, prayer, and obedience—to vocalize her thoughts within a rigid orthodox framework without overstepping dangerous boundaries prevalent in the medieval period. Her spiritual journey, alongside that of Marguerite Porete (another female mystic), illustrates the personal and theological struggles to navigate mystical experiences and seek divine connection under the scrutiny of the broader masses. (Bonanno, 2021). This navigation of power

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is a recurring theme in the broader study of women's literature over the last 1500 years, which seeks to recognize the overlooked contributions of women through the lens of feminist critical theory. These narratives demonstrate how female mystics strategically used their spiritual authority to claim a voice in societies that otherwise sought to limit their influence.

The reimagining of the divine is perhaps most explicitly seen in the original accounts of Dame Julian of Norwich and the works of Hildegard of Bingen, compiled in "Revelations of Divine Love" (2019). Julian's sixteen visions, received on her (presumed) deathbed, are unique for their gender-neutral portrayal of the deity, famously referring to Jesus as "mother" while maintaining the use of masculine pronouns. Research by the San Francisco State University noted that both Julian and Hildegard created imagery of a gender-balanced divinity, with a special emphasis on the feminine, that challenged traditional patriarchal views, reaffirming the significance of feminine qualities within the divine. By analyzing these visions through terms like "feminine" and "balance," scholarly works suggest that these mystics offered an early feminist perspective that went beyond empirical constraints.

The study of these diverse figures from the Vaakhs of Lalleshwari to the "vivid" visions of Julian of Norwich, points towards the collective effort to use mysticism as a tool for social and spiritual reform, bridging the gap between historical struggle and modern spiritual awareness.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted by adopting a Comparative Hagiographical and Feminist Textual Analysis approach, examining how female autonomy was expressed through spiritual frameworks and recognizing female contributions through the lens of feminist critical theory. It analyses the struggles of four female mystics, and how they navigated the challenges that they faced. Further, the impact of culture on their responses to adversities has been analysed by comparing Christian mystics to those in India. Despite the geographical and theological distances, these four major figures share a chronological proximity (14th to 16th centuries) and a commonality in their use of vernacular language. This enables the study to analyze how female autonomy manifests within vastly different socio-religious structures. The study specifically endeavours to identify how these female mystics revamped the concept of divinity and also challenged biological essentialism - the belief that the female body was "less divine" than the male body.

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Primary sources employed in the study included an analysis of the works of four major female mystics of the medieval era; songs and poems (padas) of Meerabai, highlighting her love for Lord Krishna; the hymns and vaakhs composed by Lalleshwari; revelations and books (Revelations of Divine Love) of Julian of Norwich; and the visions and letters of St. Catherine of Siena. Moreover, secondary feminist critiques including studies, articles, and journals, were reviewed thoroughly to identify recurring themes of autonomy. This enabled the study to gain a better perspective of the lives of these mystics and the impact on their spiritual journey.

A thematic analysis was conducted to uncover underlying similarities in the works of these female mystics, since their experiences were shaped through social oppression and rigid frameworks in an orthodox society. Discourse analysis also revealed various similarities in the forms of language employed by the mystics in their writings and also diverse ways in which they communicated their beliefs orally. Ultimately, the methodology explores how these women strategically utilized spiritual authority to claim a voice in societies that sought to limit their influence.

MEERABAI

Meerabai was a 16th century poet, who is portrayed as a saint, a mystic, a fervent devotee of Lord Krishna, a bereaved virahini (a woman who has been separated from her lover or husband), a person who gave up the world for God, and a rebel. Although many of the bhakta poets are regarded as rebels against various forms of injustice committed by the established order, Meera is perhaps the only one in the Hindu region who is fighting against injustice within the family and kinship group due to her gender.

Meerabai was born into a Rathore Rajput royal family in Kudki (modern-day Beawar district of Rajasthan) and spent her childhood in Merta. She was the only child of her parents. According to the legends, at an early age, Meerabai became attached to an idol of Krishna, given to her by a saint. Meerabai, from the tender age of 5, nurtured the idea that Lord Krishna was her husband, and her mother instructed her to treat it with respect, as it was Lord Krishna's Murti. After her mother's death, Meerabai was raised by her grandparents, who belonged to the Vaishnavite family of Raja Duda, where she found the proper environment for the growth of her religious sentiments. In 1527, Rana Sangram Singh, the ruling king of Mewar, fought the battle of Kanhva against Babur, the Mughal invader, and proposed the marriage of his prince Kumar Bhojraj with Meera. Her in-laws disapproved of the time she spent at Krishna's temple. Her spouse passed away soon

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after her marriage. Her father, Ratan Singh, was also killed in a battle with the Mughal emperor, Babur. Due to this, Meerabai was left behind and suffered due to the conservative members of her family. Meerabai frequently rebuked a particular person called Rana, who was probably her late husband's younger brother and used to cause her all kinds of problems. In a number of her poems, Meerabai declares, “Rana, nobody can stop me from going to the saints. There are many filthy people in your world. I left your city and your palace. I don't care what others think.”

Her husband’s family might have opposed her for another reason as well: upon her husband's death, she did not perform sati, a custom that the widows of the Rajput clan at the time observed. Meerabai, in one of her poems, explains “sati na hosyān girdhar gānsyān mhārā man moho ghanaṇāmi.” She refuses to become Sati. She terms herself as Krishna’s spouse in this poem and instead wishes to sing praises of the divine as embodied by Girdhar Krishna. She stands out as unique from the rest of the Bhakti poets, as unlike the women Bhaktas and men, who practiced selective charity to the poor, she treated them with equal consideration, disregarding social considerations such as gender, class or religion. The story of her assassination describes it to be at the hands of her mother-in-law or her brother-in-law, Rana, and that he gave her a poisoned bottle of milk and a garland with a snake entwined around it.

Eventually, Meera Bai left Mewar and went back to Merta. However, she soon discovered that Merta didn't like her unconventional behaviour either, so she started a series of pilgrimages and ended up in Dwarka. In 1546, Udai Singh, who had taken over as Rana from Vikram Singh, sent a group of Brahmins to persuade her to return to Mewar, but she refused to go with them. At that time, arrangements were made for Krishna Janmashtami Utsav in Dwarka. Devotees were merry in Bhajans, and Meerabai danced her way to Shri Krishna’s temple. When the door opened, they saw that Meera was not there. Her scarf had been wrapped around the statue, and the statue was extremely lit. People believe that she was miraculously merged with Ranchorji’s image. It is not known whether she died on that very night or sneaked away to live the rest of her life hiding her identity.

A legend states that when Kabir and Nanak died, there was a disagreement among their Hindu, Sikh and Muslim followers over whether to cremate or bury the bodies. The body was transformed into a pile of flowers. These flowers were divided into two heaps. The presence of the body sent a message to the community of the need for unity. Most of the female bhaktas (Meera, Andal,

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Mahadeviakka, Lal Ded) have disappeared from history, and there is no trace of their samadhis, suggesting they were somehow isolated from society.

Meerabai wrote hundreds of songs and created a new way to sing them, a raga. Meera's verses revolve around the themes of love, commitment, longing for her lover, renunciation, transcending societal norms and uses multiple metaphors. Her songs were not made for any personal worldly gain, instead, they arose naturally from her heart, which was filled with the thrill of God's love and adoration. Scholars agree that Meerabai wrote between 200 and 400 songs, and another 800 to 1000 songs have been credited to her. The songs were recorded verbally and not written down until a long time after they were written, which makes attribution difficult. Meerabai's songs illustrate her deep love and devotion for Krishna, whom she thought of as her significant other. The songs sing about love, joy, and sorrow. Meerabai emphasises metaphorically the desire of the personal self, or atman, to be one with the universal self, or paramatma, a poet's representation of Krishna. Songs written by Meerabai were translated into Hindi and Gujarati from the Rajasthani and Braj Bhasa languages. Even though Meerabai had suffered because of patriarchal and hierarchical arbitrariness, she did not hate or show any resentment toward her family. However, she gained strength and wisdom by remaining Lord Krishna's eternal consort.

Meera, through her poems, emphasises the depth of her spiritual love for Krishna. In V.K. Subramanian's translation, "Mystic Songs of Meera," we can read about Meera's longing in the following words:

"You are my companion in life and death!
Every moment I see the Beloved's form, I attain bliss!"

Meerabai's beautiful tunes uncover her sorrow, which she felt after the demise of her mom in her childhood, then the passing of her supporters, her significant other prince Bhojraj, and finally her being a quester whose internal self-had consistently yearned the reunion with God, the saviour, and her constant in her loneliness. She gained tranquility, grace, purity, happiness, and freedom from passions from her penitent life.

Meerabai used customary symbolism of the moon and chakora bird, light and moth, water and fish to communicate her adoration for Krishna. Meerabai used to claim that they have a love that lasts forever, and they even loved each other in their previous lives. Meerabai says ceaselessly that she is the worker of Krishna's lotus feet. Meerabai claims that she is married to Krishna; however,

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Meerabai's marriage to Krishna has no theological perspective. It was a spiritual marriage, and it became important for her to accept Krishna as her husband in a formal way. She saw her wedding performed in her dream. She showed how her love for Giridhara helped her grow spiritually, allowing her to live in the presence of God. The devotees and readers of her poems will be able to have an unimpeded spiritual relationship with the God they worship.

As a result of her willingness to renounce her caste, gender, and traditional family norms in order to fully and passionately dedicate herself to Krishna, Meerabai was seen as a significant role model. The only way Meerabai could be considered a "loyal wife" was that she devoted herself to Krishna, her chosen mate, in a way that she would not have done for her earthly spouse, the Rajput prince.

After her mother's death, Meerabai turned to Lord Krishna as her only companion, and as she grew older, she saw Krishna as a potential husband. She gained love, power, truth, and wisdom through her unwavering devotion. She most probably became attached to Krishna because he was the only constant in her life, as everyone else; her mother, father, husband, and father-in-law; had a tragic death one after the other. During both her times of bliss and solitude, she had sought refuge in her Lord Krishna. Instead of feeling isolated by social rejection, Meerabai's spiritual journey with Krishna gave her a sense of well-being and purpose. In many of her songs, Krishna is seen as a source of peace, instead of a commanding figure. This brings a comparison between Krishna and others in her life, like her mother-in-law, husband, or Rana, who treated her harshly. Meerabai's poems emphasize the gentle and pleasant nature of Lord Krishna.

Meerabai's struggle for personal freedom from societal constraints stands out. Meerabai's struggle differs vastly from that of male bhaktas like Kabir, Raidas and Chokhamela. Male bhaktas in India brought about change in societal norms while at the same time retaining their familial role. The bhakti tradition emphasized recognizing a higher divine authority, which clashed with the pativrata ideology, which demands a woman to be completely devoted to her husband. This made it difficult for female bhaktas to offset their commitment with their homegrown life, in contrast to the male bhaktas.

In mediaeval India, patriarchal society often had rigid expectations of women. Women were primarily confined to their domestic roles, thereby limiting their personal and spiritual freedoms. Meerabai's choice to renounce the world and to stay with Krishna was very unconventional and

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made her seem rebellious in nature. However, Meerabai's struggle is a legacy that continues to inspire generations to pursue their paths to spiritual and personal fulfilments.

ST. CATHERINE OF SIENA

St. Catherine of Siena (March 25, 1347 – April 29, 1380; canonized 1461) was born during the outbreak of the plague in Siena, Italy. One of only two Italian patron saints, Catherine of Siena was the second youngest of 25 children. Catherine had once remarked that she was able to serve her parents with humility because she saw her father as a symbol of Jesus, her mother as Our Lady, and her brothers as the Apostles.

Due to her cheerful nature and deep commitment to her faith from a young age, she earned the moniker "Euphrosyne," signifying "joy." By the time she was five, she would scale the steps in her house on her knees, reciting the Hail Mary prayer with each step. At the age of six, while she was out for a walk with her brother, she experienced her first of numerous visions. She witnessed Jesus seated on a throne, elevated to the status of King, encircled by Saints Peter, Paul, and John (the apostles). This divine encounter further enveloped Catherine in a world of infantile worship, penitence, and loyalty. Her early devotion to religion was common among young women in the fourteenth century of Siena. Although it reached its zenith with a circle of friends who bound ropes into intricate patterns and whipped themselves, this could be viewed merely as a form of youthful emulation of grown-up rituals of that era. Eventually, it was decided that Catherine, who was currently around twelve years old, should be ready for marriage. Initially, she opposed her mother's attempts to enhance her appearance, viewing this as a worldly act; however, her elder sister Bonaventura convinced her that improving her looks would not upset God. As a result, Catherine followed through with the plan, until two things happened very quickly one after the other. Bonaventura first passed away during delivery and Giovanna, Catherine's younger sister, passed away not long afterwards.

Catherine blamed herself, feeling that God punished the family because of her desire to indulge in the worldly pursuit of self-beautification. Things were made worse by the fact that the family appeared to have intended to marry Catherine to Bonaventura's widower, a man who might aid the family financially but was ugly, dissolute, and considerably older than Catherine. Catherine rebelled as she was determined to leave marriage behind and become Christ's bride.

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However, things were not so simple. Young women in the fourteenth century were controlled by their families, particularly their father and elder brothers; in Catherine's case, they were determined that she get over her “nonsense” and prepare for marriage. Catherine's mother supported them and this became the focal point of the family's struggle. What might Catherine do? With so much of life outside her control, she exerted herself over the one thing left to her: her own body. She avoided meals, cut off her hair, and intentionally scalded herself in hot baths. According to Raymond, family resistance ended when Catherine's father, Lacopo, who had more spiritual insight than the rest of the family, saw a dove hovering over Catherine as she prayed and then insisted that the family accept Catherine's resolve, arguing that her "marriage to Christ" more than compensated for the loss of a temporal marriage.

Catherine joined the Third Order of Saint Dominic in 1363, three days after she turned sixteen. The Third Order consisted of lay people who wore a monastic habit but lived at home and worked outside of a monastery. They assisted the impoverished and sick while also carrying out humanitarian activities. Catherine's early years as a Third Order Dominican were mostly spent in seclusion and prayer. Around the age of 21, Mary entered into what was later described as a "mystical marriage" with our Lord. While praying, Jesus, the Virgin Mary, and King David (the king of Israel) appeared to her as harpists. Jesus placed a ring on her finger and left, and the ring remained with her for the rest of her life, although Catherine was the only one who could see it.

During a prayer one morning, Catherine requested Christ to teach her so that she could say the Psalms and sing His prayers, as she was not intelligent enough to do so on her own, adding that if this was not His will, she would stay ignorant and dwell on Him elsewhere. When she awoke, she realised she could read fluently. She read so quickly that she couldn't distinguish between syllables and had difficulty spelling the words, which was interpreted as a sign of a miracle. Catherine could read Latin, but not speak it. She would not write her first letter until 1377, when she was approximately thirty years old. Her gift of writing was also revealed in a vision of Christ, who was accompanied by His adoring disciples. Her letters and dialogue were written in Italian and were so exquisite that they were likened to Dante's works.

Catherine’s work consists of her famous doctrine called *The Dialogue*, a number of prayers, and around 373 letters (11of which have not been officially numbered). They were primarily dictated, and includes those that were dictated while she was in ecstasy.6 As a result, her insights are

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expressed with heavy use of visual and metaphorical communication style, and often contains shifting and overlapping meanings from one text to the other. Her wisdom, then, is not expressed in a structured, linear, or systematic fashion. *The Dialogue* is a comprehensive investigation of the spiritual path, highlighting the complex relationship between truth and love, as well as the transformative power of divine unity. Catherine requests God for personal atonement, church reformation, global peace, and a better understanding of divine providence. The story unfolds through dialogues with God, in which Catherine's questions concerning sin, virtue, and the role of neighbours in spiritual growth are addressed with God's promise of grace.

Catherine used the idea of Christ's wounds, sometimes provocatively, to claim an intimate and privileged position within society as the Body of Christ. She explained to Raymond of Capua (leading member of the Dominican Order), for instance, in letter 219, a mission-defining vision that she had been given in answer to her particular request from Christ: she saw herself drawing Raymond, her fellow followers, and all believers and nonbelievers alike into Christ's pain. Catherine responded to apparent papal disfavour by telling Raymond to tell the pope that, should he reject her, she would hide in Christ's wounds, from which the pope could not drive her and from which she would continue to fight, in letter 267, which was also addressed to Raymond. The wounds (piaghe), according to Catherine, are a location beyond even the greatest human authority. In another strong vision shown to her confessor, she implored Christ to take her own heart and will away, and Christ appeared to her and withdrew her heart. He appeared to her again a few days later with a heart in his hands, this time placing his own heart beneath her breast. He said, “Dearest daughter, as I took your heart away from you the other day, now, you see, I am giving you mine, so that you can go on living with it forever. Saint Thomas defined understanding as a quality of knowledge that penetrates to the centre of things. Christ Himself stated that the pure in heart will see God. Catherine received visions of Christ, as well as His own Sacred Heart, through the Holy Spirit's gift of insight.

Catherine's reputation for purity developed, and a small group of disciples gathered around her, whom she educated and dictated her Dialogue to. In 1376, she travelled to Avignon to encourage Pope Gregory XI to return to Rome. Two years later, he died, and the Great Schism erupted, with Urban VI in Rome competing for power with Clement VII in Avignon. Catherine appeared to be powerless to repair the damage this time. Given her personal past, it is probably unsurprising that

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she should attempt again the technology that had previously served her so well: absolute fasting. This time, she went without both water and food, and she died within a few months.

St. Catherine of Siena was truly a powerful woman mystic of her time, who proved her worth through her mystical abilities and visions. Her devotion to Christ started at a young age and only became stronger as she grew up. From the above excerpts about her life and work, however, it is clear that she faced resistance from her family as well as the Church.

Catherine's family tried to force Catherine into the standards that were set for women during that time to be married. Women at that time could either choose to be wives or become a nun. However, Catherine's resistance to marriage was not seen as proper or "normal," even though she claimed to be the bride of Christ, i.e., wished to lead a monastic life. Moreover, she was being married to a man who could financially help the family, showcasing how women were treated as objects rather than people. Catherine's visions and willpower were what helped her in standing her ground, and thus becoming one of the most well-known mystics in history.

Coming to the Church, her subjugation might not be apparent. But a careful analysis of her experiences within Christian society can reveal how she was, in a way, oppressed by the church officials. Firstly, her word was only considered true if it was reported by her confessor, Raymond of Capua. This makes one wonder how much of Catherine's visions and letters are true and also how much of it would've been hidden from the people. Secondly, to prove herself as a mystic, she had to undergo severe fasting and self-torture which, ironically, male mystics did not necessarily have to do.

It can also be theorized that Catherine aligned her visions to the expectations of an orthodox Christian society to grow her power and reach. However, she did try to insert a few things to make a space for herself in the society as seen from this line "Catherine used the image of Christ's wounds sometimes in a provocative way to claim an intimate and privileged space for herself within society". She remains a significantly respected figure for her spiritual works, and political boldness to "speak truth to power", with it being out of the ordinary for a woman in her time period to have had such impact in political issues and on world history.

LALLESHWARI

Lalleshwari, also known as Lalla Lalleshwari, Lalla Arifa, Lalla Matschi, Lalla Togini, Lalla Yogeshwari, and Lal Ded, is an exceptionally respected figure in Kashmiri writing and for her

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supernatural qualities. She was born between 1300 to 1320 AD to a Saraswat Brahmin family of Kashmir and rose to prominence as a poet and mystic whose verses continue to touch the Kashmiri people's hearts and minds. Hindus used to refer to her as Lalleshwari, and Muslims referred to her as Lalla Arifa. Both of them endearingly called her Lal Ded, which implies Grandma. According to the legends, she is said to have been reincarnated six times and even had a son before becoming a member of the same family at Pandrenthan (six kilometres southeast of Srinagar), where she had died in her first birth. In her twelfth year of rebirth, she was married to Sona Pandita at Pampur through the family minister, Siddha Srikantha. Lalleshwari was known to be Kashmir's revolutionary poetess, for she challenged the thoughts regarding the caste system and social and religious discrimination and rejected the societal norms of her time.

Lalleshwari was a fervent devotee of the god Shiva. Additionally, she frequently engaged in Shaivism (Trika school) and Sufism through her poetry or *vaakhs*, a collection of twenty or twenty-four word rhymed or unrhymed four-line stanzas. Legends and lore surround Lalleshwari's early life, but her journey from a young bride to a revered spiritual inspiration is fundamental to her story. Her life took a different turn when she married a man who was much older than her when she was just twelve. Notwithstanding her obligations to society, the young bride was dissatisfied with the traditional course that had been set for her. Reportedly, Lalleshwari had whispered to Siddha Srikantha during the marriage ceremony that the boy she was marrying was the son she had asked questions about back in her first birth. Siddha Srikantha confirmed the claim and was astounded by Lalleshwari's esoteric knowledge. She received a brief education in religious texts before being married off into a family that mistreated her on a regular basis.

Her marriage did not last long because her mother-in-law would stop at nothing to upset her and would also incite her son to treat her badly. Despite the extreme cruelty Lalleshwari received from her mother-in-law and her husband, she bore all the humiliations and cruel treatment without raising a fuss. According to the stories, Lalla's mother-in-law placed stones on her plate of food and covered it with rice. Lalleshwari used to never complain about this, even when she was half-fed and was devoid of proper food. Each day, Lal Ded went out to fill a pot of water from the stream and would not return till evening. During this, she spent her time at Lord Shiva’s temple. Eventually she met a guru in Sidh Srikanth and began practicing yoga under his guidance. She had

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a spiritual awakening when she was sixteen years old. A few years after that, she gave up her life as a housewife and started travelling with sannyasis. She turned into a follower of Shiva after accepting Siddha Srikantha as her guru.

According to stories, her husband broke the pitcher of water she had brought home from the river bank with his stick, and that was the turning point. This was one of Lalla's regular tasks, but that morning she was a little bit late because she was taking her time meditating at her favourite temple, Nattakeshava Bhairava, which led her husband to question her loyalty. The water is reported to have stayed the same, and she is said to have filled every vessel in her kitchen with it even though the pitcher broke to pieces. She threw the remaining water outside, where it created a pond that became known as Lalatraag (located in Pampore, close to Srinagar). This event was a turning point in her life, as she rebelled against it and let the despot pair know that she would no longer tolerate it. She declared that she was going to make her own decisions and follow her own path in life, refusing to fulfil the gender-defined role of an obedient daughter-in-law any longer. She became a nomadic ascetic after leaving her husband's house permanently. Given that it left her feeling insecure and vulnerable in social situations, it was by no means an easy choice for a woman to make at the time. It was a bold move for her to walk out of a marriage and defy the culture of silence or play the societal role expected out of women during that period of time.

Lalla became a mystic at the age of 26, giving up her material life and marriage. She would wander around in her rags or without any possessions, reciting her verses. Lalleshwari didn't care about material things like attire and social graces, so she would often go around naked or barely clothed. She preached no strict religious doctrine and even detested rituals. She portrayed a lifestyle that was quite in tune with the natural world and Shaivite customs. She sought out the companionship of wandering ascetics and saints because she had an inner yearning for spiritual truth. Her encounters with these spiritual nomads kindled a fire inside of her and led her to pursue a life of self-examination and renunciation. It was nothing short of revolutionary for Lalleshwari to decide to set out on a spiritual quest of self-discovery in a society where women's roles were frequently restricted to the home.In the ancient dialect of Kashmir, Lalleshwari composed Saivite hymns. After that came the widely cited collection of hundreds of verses (vaakhas) known as Lalavakha. Interestingly, it's unlikely that Lal Ded ever considered herself a poet. As a matter of fact, her words were nothing more than chants or mantras meant to honour God. Her ability to influence

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people was demonstrated by the way her words became chants and mantras among her audience. Her Vaakhs were passed down orally through the generations in Kashmir before they were published.

Lalleshwari's philosophy, which has its roots in Kashmiri Shaivism, is a distinctive combination of Sufi philosophy, Vedanta, and mysticism. She believed that divinity was an inherent part of human existence rather than a foreign force. Her teachings emphasized the possibility of experiencing the Divine directly within oneself and the possibility of self-realization. She believes that all creatures are divinely inspired and that all existence is one, as she says in the vaakh: “Everyone has Shiva in their heart. Don't harm or injure anyone's heart. Never pollute another person's heart.”

Lal Ded gave voice to her intense desire for spiritual transcendence through her poetry, providing a distinctive viewpoint on the nature of heavenly love and the way to become one with a higher reality. Brahmins were warned by Lalla not to get trapped in the worship of any form of idol. She instead suggested that the "unison their minds with the ultimate reality, and the truth would dawn upon them". The poetry of Lal Ded is derived from the rich tradition of Kashmiri Shaivism, a philosophical movement that places an emphasis on. The potential to realize divine consciousness within oneself and the non-dualistic nature of existence. Her poetry is an expression of her personal spiritual journey and experiences, evoking the mystical path's inner turmoil, blissful moments, and yearning for divine union. In Lal Ded's poetry, the idea of divine love transcends ideas of romantic or earthly love. She highlights that there is no difference between individuals of different faiths in one of her well-known *vaakhs*. She even challenged the Guru's patriarchal authority in numerous of her verses. One of her greatest achievements has been to open the complex Shaiva philosophy from the ivory towers of Sanskrit-knowing academics to the masses of ordinary Kashmiri-speaking people.

Lalleshwari used poetry as a medium to communicate her life experiences, her faith in God, and the realities of earthly existence. She enhanced the Kashmiri language by communicating mystical insights and nuanced philosophical ideas through it. Lalleshwari has been characterized as a devotee, a Vedantin, and someone who impacted the way people thought and lived in her era. She addresses men of all faiths in her vaakhs. Lal Ded came to understand the fundamentals of the Universal and the one religion shared by all people, namely, humanity.

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Lalleshwari's life is a remarkable testament to self-transformation and rebelliousness against societal norms. Lalleshwari was married off at a very young age, and she was often mistreated by her in-laws. In addition to this, the belief that her husband was a reincarnation of her son from a previous life likely hampered the formation of a conventional marital bond between them. However, instead of submitting to such circumstances, Lalleshwari took a powerful step by choosing to live as a wandering ascetic, reflecting her profound commitment to self-realization and divine truth.

Lal calls for an inward turn that results in a simple and spontaneous realization of this ultimate reality. This is because, as she states in one of her *vaakhs*, each of us contains Shiva, who is subtle and impulsive. Lal guides one through a person's journey through the miseries of humanity, worldly disillusionment, an agonizing search for God, and, finally, the realization of the ultimate, liberating truth.

Lalleshwari's poetry and teachings have an influence that transcends her literary merit. She was able to simplify difficult Sanskrit scriptures for her followers, which made mystical knowledge accessible to all people. Her challenge to the patriarchal society serves as an inspiration to readers by highlighting the strength of spiritual and personal resilience. She was determined to find a clear path out of the complex web of social interactions, everyday life, and emotional entanglements, leading to the happiness and clarity of self-discovery. In the face of apparent social disapproval for being such a fearless and outspoken woman, she remained silent and distant.

Her teachings are universal: material pursuits and human attachments are fleeting and pointless, and they breed negative emotions such as pride, rage, greed, and fear of dying or losing oneself. It is easy to relate to Lal because of her humanism. This could help to explain why all Kashmiri social classes continued to recite her sayings in songs, proverbs, and hymns well into the 19th century, instead of finding them in any written record. They also represent one of the first works written in Kashmiri, helping that language's literary heritage to take root.

Lalleshwari's life and contributions serve as an example of how social rejection and personal struggle can lead to deep spiritual understanding. Her legacy serves as a striking reminder of the capacity for spirituality to transform when it faces and overcomes the constraints placed on it by social standards.

JULIAN OF NORWICH

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Julian, a writer who lived during Geoffrey Chaucer's (English poet, author, and civil servant best known for The Canterbury Tales) time, was the first female author of vernacular English literature. She was a renowned mystic, and many people consider her Revelations of Divine Love, also known as the Showings, to be one of the most important records of medieval religious experience. A significant portion of our knowledge of her is derived from her incredible book, The Revelations of Love, which is the outcome of two decades of contemplation on a series of visions that showed Julian the extent of God's unwavering love for us in Jesus Christ.

The theology and messages of Julian are far richer than most people realize. Numerous scholarly works have been published to investigate the overall meaning of the Revelation and its implications in great detail, and their contributions are priceless. Her unusually strong and endearing mind and personality are indicated by the depth and clarity of her vision, the way she presents her theology, and the beauty and sincerity with which she expresses herself.

Born in 1342, Julian of Norwich most likely started her lonely life as an anchoress at an early age. As an anchorite, Julian dedicated herself to communication with God. She resided in a cell near St. Julian's Church in Norwich. According to Thiebaux (1994), "an anchorite was locked away, never to re-emerge in the world. Penance, meditation, reading, and, in certain circumstances, writing were the anchorites' only activities." Some academics have also speculated that Julian might have been widowed by the plague or the wars and if so, by the time she reached the anchorage, she was probably also a mother to children who had passed away. Julian may have experienced that firsthand because of her visions of God and Christ as mother figures, as well as of a body giving birth to the "full, fair creature" which is a child.

Julian was literate and well-connected to theological thinkers of her day, as evidenced by her works. Julian was a young woman who asked God for three favours because, although she was obviously devoted to her studies, they were not enough to satiate her desire to know God. "The first was to have a recollection of Christ's Passion. The second was bodily sickness, and the third was to have, of God's gift, three wounds" (Julian 1978, 125). She was hoping that by receiving these three favours, her understanding of God would grow. Although Julian's wish to be sickened to the brink of death in order to have those visions may seem strange to modern ears, many of the greatest holy individuals from other religious traditions have expressed a similar yearning. Gandhi

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fasted until he saw visions, the Buddha abstained from food and liquids during his meditations, and the prophet Muhammad holed up in a secluded cave to observe fasts and pray.

In May of 1373, Julian went to bed because she thought she would die shortly. Her age was thirty. As she passed away, a crucifix was held out in front of her by a curate, a priest's assistant, offering her comfort. Julian then experienced a string of sixteen amazing visions, which she recorded in her book Revelations of Divine Love. Julian might have been an anchoress or a nun before the events, but it was evident that she had transformed to an anchoress when a donation was given to "Julian ankorite". Julian seems to have been residing in Norwich in 1416, because Isabel Ufforde, the Countess of Suffolk, left 20 shillings to a "Julian, recluse at Norwich" in her will. One of Julian's fellow mystics and English contemporaries, Margery Kempe, recounts a story about visiting her anchorage, noting that a steady stream of people came to seek Julian's counsel and direction. She goes by Mother Julian in multiple reports because of this.

The Revelations of Divine Love are preserved in two different forms: the brief version, composed shortly after Julian had the revelation, and the extended version, composed two decades later. A long document that has been considerably expanded includes her views on what she had been shown. Now, the only pieces that survive are copies of earlier works from the seventeenth century and fragments from the fourteenth. Julian understands the concept of "prayer," particularly in the Long Text, to imply something considerably profound. She uses the word "prayer" to describe both God and our relationship throughout our lives.

In The Shewings of Julian of Norwich, Julian offers a thoughtful analysis of gender and divinity. In chapter fifty-ninth, Julian describes Jesus as "our very Moder in grace, be taking of our kynde made; and He is our very Moder in kynde, of our first making." It is incorrect to assign to the second person the entire just process and every honourable duty of the deserving moderator (2469-72). Put another way, Jesus is our Mother both because of His own incarnation and because He created humanity out of divine will. According to Julian, Christ receives the "feminine" attributes of tenderness, love, and nurturing as well as the ability to channel feminine generative and life-sustaining energy.

In the sixty-first chapter of Shewings, Julian describes the feminine life-sustaining force of Christ as follows: "A parent may give their child away, but our pious Lord Jesus can feed us with Himself and administer the blessed sacrament, which is a pretious food of very life, with full curtesy and

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full tenderness." Christ lovingly nourishes humanity with His body in the Eucharist, just as a mother feeds her infant with milk from her own body.

Julian discovers the feminine liquids of nurturing and life-sustenance, as well as female generative force, when she journeys into Christ's open side. Julian characterizes Christ's side as "vast enow for al mankynd that shal be save to resten in peace and in love" in chapter 24. And so He proceeded to fix His ignoble and ostentatious water, which He allowed to flow endlessly out of love (865-8). Julian's description of Christ's exposed side resembles the womb quite a bit. It is a location where humanity is given fresh vitality. Water and blood, which both support human life and flow from a woman's body at childbirth, are also infused with Christ's side. Furthermore, Julian argues that Christ bleeds His blood and water out of love for humanity, just as women shed their blood and water during childbirth. In this way, the ability to give birth and love to the human race is a shared gift between human mothers and the Supreme Mother, Christ.

While referring to Christ as "God our Mother," Julian also uses the pronoun "He." While Heimmel contends that Julian's dual references to God as "He" and "Mother" paint an image of an "asexual" God (3570), God is entirely both masculine and feminine. As a result, Julian's imago Dei is gender-neutral as opposed to asexual as Heimmel suggests. Furthermore, by associating the feminine with equally respectable traits and perceiving a male-female fusion in the divine, Julian transcends gender norms in her approach to divinity.

Julian, however, gives us the insight that our ability to experience love, both the love of our creator and the love of others was made possible by that death and suffering. She tells us that "sin is behovely," which means that it is required or inescapable for redemption to take place. She was able to reassure us that "everything will be well" because death, misery, and sin surrounded Julian. More than any other term in the revelations, she uses the word siker. Modern English would refer to this as "secure."

Her book, The Revelations of God, provides us with the most information about her. It can be understood that she, when compared to other mystics of that time, was much more literate and thus liberal. Her uprising in a comparatively educated background can be the reason that sets her apart from other mystics and provides her with the ability to describe her visions in a more unorthodox manner.

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Julian seems to be inspired by the trend of suffering to attain visions and become closer to God, believing that her illness would lead her to receive visions. It can be contemplated that her belief in this concept is why she had a series of visions when she was on her deathbed. Till this point Julian seems like any other mystic. But what makes her different from other mystics is the fact that she calls Christ as a female divinity i.e., a mother. She also emphasizes the traditional feminine qualities of care and empathy in Christ to make people understand that God need not be male.

She also does not completely label Christ as a feminine power as she gives Christ the pronoun "He". In doing so, Julian breaks the orthodox belief of associating god as a man and instead urges people to view God in a gender-neutral manner. This can be seen as a strongly feminist outlook, given that feminism is about gender equality.

It is understood that Julian always had a positive approach to life. She believes that death, misery and sin are all a part of life. Julian's work tells us that she preached equality and also that prayers can be subjective to people as prayers are a way we connect with God and everyone has their own way, which is very true. Her approach, which is different from most mystics of the time, makes her a revolutionary mystic.

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

When we compare the Eastern mystics with their Western counterparts, we see a fascinating split in how the "Divine" is approached. In the East, the goal was often dissolution or transcendence of social identity; in the West, it was revelation and reformation within an established religious framework.

Meerabai is portrayed as the "Lover" in both medieval and contemporary works. Her relationship is defined by Madhurya Bhava (erotic/conjugal devotion). She treats Krishna as a physical, albeit divine, presence. After her mother's death, Meerabai turned to Lord Krishna as her only companion, and as she grew older, she saw Krishna as a potential husband. On the other hand, Lalleshwari, portrayed as focusing on her own self, moves beyond the "Other." For her, the journey is inward as God (Shiva) is not a person to be hugged but a consciousness to be realized. Her work is intellectual and "dry" in a scholarly, meditative sense as she focused on stopping the "coming and going" of the breath and the soul.

For both the mystics, the "World" (Samsara) was a trap. Both women renounced their old lives by literally "walking away"; Meerabai left her old life as a Rajput princess, while Lalleshwari

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renounced her home and life with her husband, thus becoming wandering mystics. Although treating their respective bodies differently - Lalla went naked to prove the body is irrelevant, while Meerabai danced to prove that the body is a temple of praise - they sought to be "dead to the world" while still living. The primary goal of both the mystics was Moksha or breaking the cycle of reincarnation/rebirth. They wanted to dissolve the ego so they would not have to be born again in this “cruel” world. Julian of Norwich centred on the humanity of Christ in her works. Her visions are graphic in nature, as she writes of the “bloody flowing of the crown of thorns” in great detail. Yet, her ultimate understanding is one of great motherly warmth and care. God is the “Mother” of the soul. However, St. Catherine of Siena viewed her relation with God as that of a “spiritual marriage”, a marriage of duty and sacrifice. She saw God as the eternal truth and believed that the soul is just a vessel to carry out his will on Earth. Julian and Catherine did not run away from their pain, rather they tried to make sense of the pain. Catherine was a mystic activist travelling to Avignon and Rome, and Julian was an anchorite, but also functioned as a counsellor to her community. The two of them stayed connected to their community, rather than isolating them. Western mystics viewed the human body uniquely, through the view of incarnation (God becoming a human). The Westerner knew that to live was to live by the body, but also to suffer in the body. Suffering as it was known in the West was not something to be transcended or eliminated, as in the East, but was instead an opportunity to offer up one’s own suffering in union to Christ’s sufferings. To sum it up, in the East, Meera and Lal Ded sought moksha, or liberation from the cycle of birth and death. The society viewed them as outcasts or the madwomen of marginal castes. They achieved liberation by being totally absorbed in the divine through their ecstatic poems of love and their expression of freedom. Similarly, in the West, Julian of Norwich and Catherine of Siena sought unio mystica, the union of the human will with God’s will. Like Meera and Lalla, they too had to exist on the periphery of society, as recluses or spiritual counsellors, pouring out their spiritual wisdom derived from their direct experience of visions of divine love. One of the main differences, however, was that both Julian and Catherine remained inside the Church. Even when they criticized the Pope, they did so as "daughters of the Church." In contrast, Meerabai and Lalla were essentially anarchists. They bypassed the Brahmin priests, the temples, and the caste system entirely. Lalla famously mocked people for worshiping stone idols, and Meerabai’s "temple" was wherever she happened to be singing. So, they both were "outsiders" by choice. The

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Eastern mystics also had a different understanding of the nature of sin than did the Western mystics. For them, the ignorance of our true nature was sin, or avidya. For the Western mystics, it was seen as a kind of wound or debt that had to be healed by grace. In the East, the spiritual mystic is often portrayed as beautiful as the dancing queen or as unembarrassed as the naked sage, illustrating their experience of liberation and transcendence. In the West, the mystic uses the bleeding Christ and the nursing Mother of God as examples of the intimacy of divine love and our painful wound and consequent need for this love. These two paths reflect two different approaches to the realization of an ultimate truth, which transcends human description

BARRIERS AND SPIRITUAL RESPONSES

Mystics	Julian of Norwich	Lalleshwari (Lal Ded)	St. Catherine of Siena	Meerabai
Primary Socio-religious Barriers	Challenged the medieval theological "deficit" of the female form, which was viewed as a vessel of temptation. Navigated a Church hierarchy that used gendered biological Essentialism to deny women agency and spiritual legitimacy.	Endured mistreatment by in-laws and the rigid caste system. Resisted the restrictive social norms that govern the conduct and autonomy of married women.	Struggled with parental pressure for marriage and domestic life. Rebelled and chose a life of devotion and mystical union with Christ. Becoming a public leader showcased how her devotion transcended the domestic role.	Expected to uphold the Rajput codes of honor but chose a life of devotion. Mistreated by her in-laws for not following the customs.

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Spiritual and Feminine Responses	Deconstructed patriarchal divinity by conceptualizing "Jesus as Mother," integrating feminine nurturing and biological essentialism into the Godhead to validate the spiritual dignity of womanhood.	Asserted spiritual autonomy by renouncing domestic constraints and materialistic desires. Wrote Vaakhs to emphasise on internal mystical experience over external orthodoxy and ritualism.	Asserted spiritual autonomy by renouncing domestic constraints and materialistic desires. Wrote Vaakhs to emphasise on internal mystical experience over external orthodoxy and ritualism.	Refused to perform sati and declared Lord Krishna as her husband. She claimed spiritual autonomy over her marital and societal roles. She expressed her devotion through her poetry and bhajans for Lord Krishna.

CONCLUSION

Mysticism, albeit a culmination of devout faith and commitment to God, proved to be a powerful tool for women. Whether we look at Christian Mysticism of the Medieval Era or Mysticism of the Bhakti Movement, it is evident that the fundamental essence of Mysticism remains the same. These women's writings, poems and visions show that they are driven by a strong desire to be one with God. The works of each of these women demonstrate their love and ideologies about God. It gives us an insight about their hardships and struggles that they faced while walking on the difficult path of spirituality. Women suffer and are neglected because males in various parts of the world frequently disregard the value of women's lives and spirituality.

As we understood above, Meerabai, Catherine, Lalleshwari and Julian were all important female mystics. They all had their own ways of believing in God. Meerabai believed that she had a romantic relationship with Lord Krishna, Lalleshwari was a devotee of Lord Shiva and it is believed that she reincarnated almost 6 times. Catherine had a “mystical marriage” to Jesus Christ and Julian associated Christ as a motherly figure. Another important thing to note about these mystics is that rather than imposing their thoughts on their followers, they preferred to interact

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more with their supporters.

Through a comparison between these mystics of the East and West, it can be noted that there are certain commonalities, as well as differences between their works. While the mystics of the East focused more on praising their respective Gods through poetry and expressions of freedom, their Western counterparts placed more emphasis on the visions they claimed to receive from God and also gave importance to the teachings of the Church.

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